



Roll Out the Rain Barrels

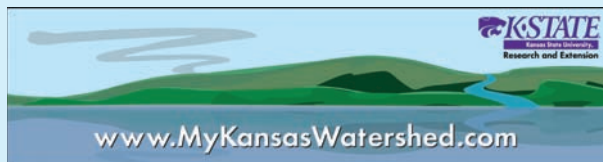
**A Water Conservation
and Water Quality Project**

Two historical events have marked a heightened need for citizens and communities to help protect water as a natural resource:

- In the 1930s, severe drought and dust bowl conditions increased the need for water conservation; and
- In the 1970s, Congress passed the Clean Water Act to enforce water quality standards in the United States.

Today, the state of Kansas is in a Governor's Call to Action to develop a 50-Year Vision for Future of Water in Kansas. The Kansas Water Office, the Kansas Department of Agriculture, and Kansas Water Authority are working in communities across Kansas to gather opinions, data, and suggestions for long-term water supplies in the state.

Kansas citizens and communities are even more concerned about water conservation and water quality issues because of more variable precipitation including recent drought years, increasing water bills for drinking water supplies and waste water treatment, increasing populations, expanding urban areas, and more pollutants in local supplies and waterways.



Smoky Hill River Kanopolis Lake Watershed

**Each of us can be Clean Water
Neighbors and make simple
changes to protect and
conserve local water supplies**

- **Outdoor landscapes** – Plant grass, trees, and shrubs native to the area to prevent erosion and promote water infiltration into the soil profile. Install native buffers in landscapes by placing plant materials along the driveway, alley, curb or other areas to slow water flow, trap, and filter pollutants before entering waterways. Incorporate xeriscaping into the home landscape using hardy, well-adapted native plant materials that require less water, have fewer insect problems, and less need for fertilizer and maintenance. Use mulch in the landscape to minimize evaporation, conserve soil moisture, reduce weed growth and prevent erosion.
- **Install rain barrels** to collect rain water for later use. Rain barrels also help protect local water supplies by reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollutants from leaving your property and entering local water supplies. If you don't have a "Rain barrel," try re-purposing buckets, trash cans, wooden, metal or plastic barrels, pots, old bathtubs, etc.

Collecting rain water is budget and environmentally friendly. It may save money on your water bill.

- In the heat of the summer, nearly 40 percent of household water is used for outdoor watering.
- Collecting rainwater and using it slowly on your landscape encourages infiltration, which helps prevent runoff of pollutants — including nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment, and *E.coli* bacteria — into local streams, creeks, and rivers.
- Rainwater may be better for flowers, vegetables, trees, shrubs, and lawns because it is not chlorinated, free of chemicals, naturally soft, oxygen rich, and warmer than water coming from the hose or sprinkler.
- Plants, trees and shrubs may be more vibrant and hearty when irrigated with rainwater.



Rain barrels connect directly to the home's downspout and allow the rainwater or storm water coming off the roof to fill the barrel. If space is available, several rain barrels can be connected, creating a series of barrels allowing for larger amounts of storm water to be collected and stored.

Being a good steward of natural resources makes a difference. Normally, water from a kitchen faucet is considered safe and reliable. But in many areas tap water is surface water that has made a long journey to your home. Before being delivered through pipes to your faucet, tap water may have:

- Run down a city street;
- Drained into a storm drain;
- Emptied into a creek, river, or stream;
- Flowed through a water distribution system; and/or
- Been treated at a water plant to meet state and federal drinking water standards.

It takes cooperation and collaboration to protect local water supplies and ensure a safe, reliable drinking water supply. Building and installing rain barrels in a home landscape is one simple way to do your part and one step toward being a Clean Water Neighbor.

For more information on water quality protection, contact Stacie Minson, K-State Research & Extension Watershed Specialist, sedgett@ksu.edu, 785-814-7100 or visit <http://www.MyKansasWatershed.com>



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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service November 2015
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